

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 013818 TOSEC 010001

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 (ISO) R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:MDRAPER:DPW

APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY

P:JJSISCO

NEA:JLATHERTON, JR.

INR:HSAUNDDRS (SUBF)

NSC:ROAKLEY(SUBS)

S/S:RKUCHEL (SUBS)

EUR:AHARTMAN (SUBS)

IO:SLEWIS (SUBS)

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TO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

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S E C R E T STATE 013818 TOSEC 010001

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

1. YOU SHOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH FOREIGN MINISTER TO SOUND

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SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 013818 TOSEC 010001

OUT THE FRENCH ATTITUDES TOWARD DETERIORATING LEBANESE

SITUATION AND TO OUTLINE SOME OF OUR IDEAS.

2. YOU SHOULD OPEN YOUR DISCUSSION BY EXPLAINING THAT WE HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FIGHTING IN LEBANON, WHICH HAS ELEMENTS SUGGESTING THAT THE SITUATION MAY BE MOVING INTO AN OMINOUS STAGE. THE LATEST, NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENT WAS THE RESIGNATION OF PRIME MINISTER KARAME, VIRTUALLY THE ONLY MUSLIM MODERATE WITH THE PRESTIGE AND AUTHORITY TO ASSERT EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN MOVES FOR A CEASE-FIRE AND AN EVENTUAL POLITICAL SETTLEMENT.

3. YOU SHOULD SAY THAT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE FRIENDS OF LEBANON SHOULD STAND BY IDLY AT THIS SENSITIVE JUNCTURE WITHOUT EXAMINING WHAT THEY MIGHT DO TO FORESTALL THE DANGERS. AS THE CONFRONTATION INTENSIFIES WITH THE INCREASING INVOLVEMENT OF PALESTINIAN MILITIAS AND THE LEBANESE ARMY, THE ATTENDANT DANGERS OF OVERT SYRIAN AND ISRAELI INTERVENTION ALSO INCREASE, WITH SERIOUS IM-

PLICATIONS FOR AREA STABILITY AND PEACE EFFORTS.

4. AT SAME TIME, WE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE ARAB PARTIES, WITHIN LEBANON AND WITHOUT, CANNOT RESOLVE THE PROBLEM ON THEIR OWN. WHILE THE SYRIAN MEDIATION EFFORT HAS BEEN COMMENDABLE IN SOME RESPECTS, WE ARE DOUBTFUL THAT IT WILL BE SUCCESSFUL. EVEN IF IT BROUGHT ABOUT A SHORT-TERM RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE WARRING PARTIES IN LEBANON, WHICH SEEMS INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY, IN THE LONG RUN AN ENHANCED SYRIAN POSITION IN LEBANON, WITH ATTENDANT INCREASED PALESTINIAN INFLUENCE, COULD MOVE LEBANON TOWARD BECOMING A CONFRONTATION STATE, AND FURTHER COMPLICATE THE ARAB/ISRAEL PROBLEM.

5. YOU SHOULD SAY TO THE MINISTER THAT WE BELIEVE THAT THE SITUATION DEMANDS STEPS GOING BEYOND THE SECURING OF A CEASEFIRE. EFFORTS TO BRING THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL SHOULD ALSO, IN OUR VIEW, FOCUS ON OBTAINING A POLITICAL COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO THE MAIN MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN GROUPS IN LEBANON.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 013818 TOSEC 010001

6. KNOWING OF THE FRENCH INTEREST IN LEBANON, AND THE FRENCH CONCILIATION EFFORT LAST YEAR, WE WOULD WELCOME THE MINISTER'S THOUGHTS OR HIS PROPOSALS AS TO WHAT MIGHT BE DONE NOW.

7. FOR OUR PART, WE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING WHAT WE COULD DO -- UNILATERALLY OR IN COOPERATION WITH OTHERS--AND HAVE CONCLUDED THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TACTICALLY FOR US NOT

TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE, ALTHOUGH WE WOULD MAKE A MAXIMUM EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF AN INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE BY OTHERS. WE WOULD ALSO MAKE A MAJOR EFFORT TO ENLIST COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE FOR THIS INITIATIVE IN QUARTERS WHERE WE HAVE SOME INFLUENCE (E.G. SAUDI ARABIA, ISRAEL, EGYPT).

8. OUR TENTATIVE THOUGHTS RUN ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES, AND WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY REACTION GOF HAS:

A. FRANCE MIGHT CONSIDER TAKING LEADERSHIP OF AN INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE, EITHER DIRECTLY, OR THROUGH APPOINTMENT BY THE UN SEC GEN OF A PRESTIGIOUS FRENCHMAN TO LEAD WALDHEIM'S SPONSORED EFFORT;

B. A FRENCHMAN WOULD APPEAR TO US TO BE THE BEST CHOICE FOR THE LEADER BECAUSE OF FRANCE'S EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB WORLD COUPLED WITH ITS PAST ROLE AS A SUPPORTER OF CHRISTIAN SECURITY IN THE ME. (FYI:

ALTHOUGH THE FRENCH MIGHT THINK OF COUVRE DE MURVILLE IN THIS CONNECTION, WE DO NOT WANT TO BE SEEN AS SUGGESTING WHOM FRENCH WOULD CHOOSE. END FYI.)

C. IF GOF SEES MERIT IN A DIRECT FRENCH OR A WALDHEIM-INSPIRED EFFORT, WE COULD DISCUSS LATER BETWEEN OURSELVES HOW IT MIGHT BE ORGANIZED.

D. THE INITIATIVE WOULD REQUIRE THAT THE POLITICAL ISSUES DIVIDING CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM FACTIONS IN LEBANON BE DEALT WITH. THE SYRIAN FIVE-POINT PROPOSAL OF DECEMBER COULD RPT BE A STARTING POINT. (FYI: IT WOULD CLEARLY HAVE TO GO FURTHER THAN COUVRE'S EARLIER EFFORT AIMED
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 013818 TOSEC 010001

BASICALLY AT RESTORATION OF STATUS QUO ANTE. END FYI.)

9. YOU SHOULD EXPLAIN TO THE MINISTER THAT, IF SOME COMMON STRATEGY CAN BE DEVELOPED BETWEEN THE U.S. AND FRANCE ON THIS MATTER, THE INITIAL STEP IN BRINGING IT ABOUT PROBABLY WOULD BE FOR THE FRENCH TO APPROACH THE SYRIANS IN DIFFICULT TASK OF OBTAINING THEIR ACQUIESCENCE. FOR OUR PART WE COULD WORK WITH THE FRENCH IN TRYING TO SECURE EGYPTIAN COOPERATION OF THE KIND THAT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR SYRIA TO GO ALONG WITH OUR STRATEGY.

10. YOU SHOULD STRESS TO SAUVAGNARGUES THAT THIS PROPOSAL IS INTENDED TO STIMULATE A U.S.-FRENCH DIALOGUE TO REFINA A STRATEGY WHICH WE COULD PURSUE COOPERATIVELY, WE REMAIN OPEN-MINDED AND WOULD OF COURSE BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER

FRENCH PROPOSALS, ALONG ABOVE OR A DIFFERENT TACK. YOU CAN TELL SAUVAGNARGUES THAT I WILL BE GLAD TO DISCUSS THE MATTER FURTHER WITH HIM WHEN WE SEE EACH OTHER IN BRUSSELS LATER THIS WEEK.

11. IN THE MEANTIME, IT SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS SUBJECT SHOULD REMAIN A MATTER ONLY FOR THE U.S. AND FRANCE AND WILL NOT BE REVEALED BY US TO OTHER PARTIES.

12. REFTTEL PROVIDES YOU WITH ADDED BACKGROUND AND CRITICAL ASPECTS OF CURRENT FIGHTING, SYRIAN MEDIATION EFFORT, ETC., WHICH YOU CAN DRAW UPON IN YOUR PRESENTATION TO MINISTER. SISCO

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, TOSEC, POLITICAL SITUATION, CAT-C
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE013818
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: MDRAPER:DPW
Enclosure: AD:
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P840096-1670
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760140/aaaabjnm.tel
Line Count: 182
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 MAR 2004 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <29 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANESE SITUATION
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PREL, LE, FR, XF
To: PARIS BEIRUT DAMASCUS MULTIPLE SECRETARY AIRCRAFT
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006